

Central Intelligence Agency  
National Foreign Assessment Center

28 November 1979

## MEMORANDUM

SUBJECT: Status of Iranian Forces in Khuzestan

Iranian forces in Khuzestan consist of one armored division reinforced with Revolutionary Guards, three squadrons of F-5 interceptors, five batteries of HAWK surface-to-air missiles, and a few small naval combatant ships. These forces are on alert as part of a wider military alert because of the confrontation with the US.

Iranian forces in the province are capable of suppressing Arab opposition if Iraq does not increase its support to the dissidents. The government forces now there do not have sufficient manpower to protect the numerous oil installations in the area from sabotage, however. Iran could not hold the province against a full-scale Iraqi attack.

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Units. The 92nd Armored Division headquartered at Ahvaz (see map) comprises the bulk of the ground forces in the province and is generally oriented to face an Iraqi attack. Subordinate armored units are located at Ahvaz, Dezful, and Hamidiyeh. In addition, an infantry brigade occupies static defenses along the border with Iraq. The armored division is equipped with approximately 320 Chieftain tanks and 250 to 300 APCs.

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*This memorandum was prepared by the Office of Strategic Research for the Iran Task Force. Questions or comments may be addressed to Chief, Iran Task Force*

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NSA and NAVY review(s) completed.

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The division has been reinforced by several contingents of Khomeini's Revolutionary Guards. The Guards have assumed almost complete responsibility for internal security, including oil installations, and have been brutal in suppressing dissent. Although we have no information on the number of Revolutionary Guards in the province, they probably number several thousand based on the scope of their activities. [ ]

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Three squadrons equipped with 80 F-5 interceptors are stationed at Vahdati Air Base near Dezful. A few F-5 air-

Five HAWK surface-to-air missile batteries, each with six launchers, are deployed near Dezful. In addition, there are three unoccupied HAWK sites near Ahvaz. We have no information on the combat readiness of the crews and equipment at the Dezful sites. Iran had achieved only a marginal ability to operate the HAWK system without US support under the Shah and capabilities have declined since the Revolution. [ ]

The Navy stations only a small portion of its Persian Gulf fleet in Khuzestan's ports. Four corvettes, one missile boat, four minesweepers, and eight patrol boats were based in Abadan, Khorramshahr, and Bandar-e Shahpur between 15 and 25 November. One of the corvettes and the missile boat were undergoing minor repairs at Abadan. [ ]

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Capabilities. Iranian ground forces in the province are capable of suppressing internal opposition as long as Iraq does not increase its support to the dissidents. Arab guerrillas operating in small groups are mounting raids, attacking government and oil installations, and ambushing Revolutionary Guards. Government forces have reacted harshly by engaging in mass arrests, surprise searches, and summary executions, in an attempt to break the resistance. Despite these efforts, Iranian forces do not have enough manpower to adequately protect all installations. As recently as 16 November, Arab guerrillas bombed an oil pipeline near Abadan and a Navy warehouse in Khorramshahr. [ ]

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Iraq is supplying large quantities of arms and explosives to the guerrillas and began training Iranian Arabs this summer in guerrilla camps it maintains for the Palestinians. Soon after training began, there was a notable increase in the professionalism of guerrilla operations. Infiltration of men and arms from Iraq reportedly has increased in recent months. In the past, Iraq dispatched hundreds of special forces troops and commandos to reinforce Palestinian forces in Lebanon. Should Iraq take similar action in Khuzestan, the local Iranian forces would be hard pressed to control the situation. [REDACTED]

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Iraq's armed forces have not assumed a threatening posture toward Iran. Were they to attack, however, Iranian forces could not hold the province. The Iraqis would likely mount an attack against Khuzestan using two reinforced armored divisions and two mechanized divisions--approximately 1,300 tanks--with extensive air support. This would permit the Iraqis to achieve a four to one advantage in men and equipment on the ground while leaving seven divisions to hold the rest of the border. [REDACTED]

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In the past Iran counted on its superior air force and armored and heliborne reinforcements from Iranian forces outside the province to offset Iraq's advantage on the ground. With many aircraft not operational, however, the Iranian Air Force is unlikely to be much help to the ground forces. The Army's logistic and transport systems are in chaos and probably unable to move large quantities of armor to Khuzestan on short notice. Much of the helicopter force is grounded and air defenses are likely to be weak. Iranian armored units have no mobile surface-to-air missile system like the Iraqi SA-6, leaving them vulnerable to Iraqi air strikes. The Iranians do have sufficient air power to inflict serious damage on Iraqi oil facilities. [REDACTED]

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Because of Iran's past air and naval superiority over the other Gulf states, the defenses of Khuzestan are not oriented towards repelling an attack from the sea. There are no known coastal defense sites or naval minefields and most military units are stationed some distance from the coast. Extensive coastal mud flats, however, could hamper an amphibious assault. [REDACTED]

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Iranian Forces in Khuzestan

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Ground Forces

Ahvaz

Division headquarters/one armored brigade  
112 medium tanks  
200 APCs  
18 ZSU-57/2 anti-aircraft artillery  
60 155mm self-propelled howitzers

Dezful

Armored brigade  
83 medium tanks  
50 APCs  
18 155mm self-propelled howitzers

Hamidiyeh

Armored brigade  
92 medium tanks  
85 APCs

Air Force

Vahdati (near Dezful)

three fighter squadrons  
60 F-5E  
20 F-5F

Air Defense

Ahvaz

3 unoccupied HAWK sites

Dezful

5 HAWK batteries

Navy

Abadan

1 missile boat (in drydock)  
3 corvettes (1 in drydock)

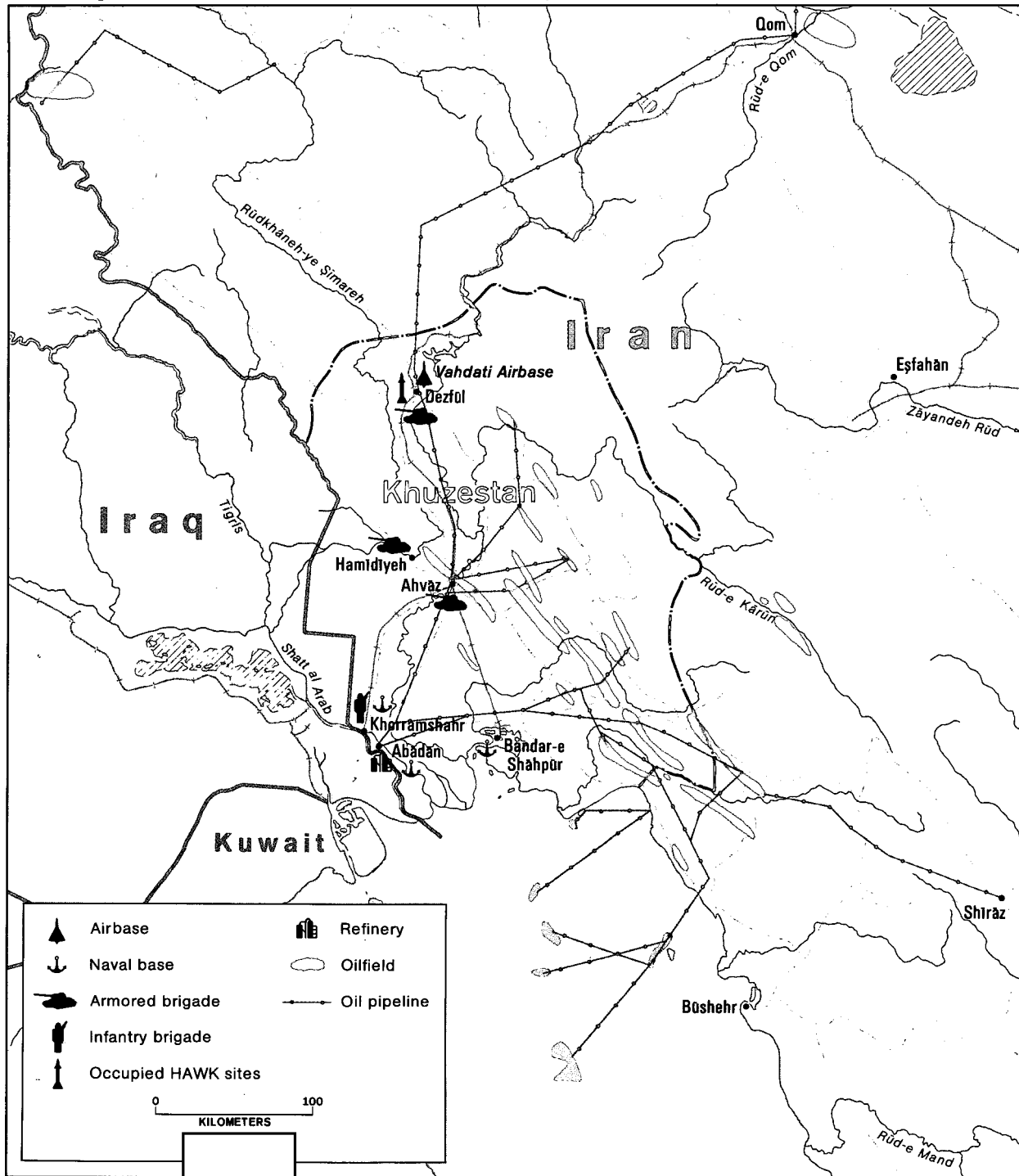
Bandar-e Shapur

1 corvette  
3 minesweepers

Khorramshahr

8 patrol boats  
1 minesweeper

## Military Units in Khuzestan Province, Iran



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